

Chesterfield County DSS Child Welfare Services Review November 2004

A team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Chesterfield County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases were reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, Chesterfield DSS staff, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

Period included in Case Record Review: May 1, 2004 to Oct 30, 2004

Period included in Outcome Measures: Oct 1, 2003 to Sept 30, 2004

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county to:

- a) Determine to what degree services are delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and agency policy; and
- b) Assess the outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

State law (sec 43-1-115) states, in part:

The state department shall conduct, at least once every five years, a substantive quality review of the child protective services and foster care programs in each county and each adoption office in the State. The county's performance must be assessed with reference to specific outcome measures published in advance by the department.

The information obtained by the child welfare services review process will:

- a) Give county staff feedback on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- b) Direct state office technical assistance staff to assist county staff with their areas needing improvement.
- c) Inform agency administrators of which systemic factors impair county staff's ability to achieve specific outcomes.
- d) Direct training staff to provide training for county staff specific to their needs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The county-specific review of child welfare services is both quantitative and qualitative.

The review is **quantitative** because it begins with an analysis of every child welfare outcome report for that county for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the county in all areas of the child welfare program: Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake, CPS Investigations, CPS In-Home Treatment, Foster Care, Managed Treatment Services (MTS), and Adoptions.

The review is **qualitative** because it includes an analysis of information obtained from agency clients, staff and stakeholders. Client and stakeholder information was obtained by interviews. The questions posed to clients and stakeholders are designed to illicit information about the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services.

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Section One

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding: Substantially Achieved

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations.

Finding: Strength

-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment.

Finding: Strength

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment

Data Time Period: 10/1/03 to 09/30/04

	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.44% *	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,132	15, 295	16,041.66	(746.66)
Chesterfield	214	213	212.80	0.20

* This standard is based on state law. It is not a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 1 : Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0
Treatment	3	75	1	25	6	0
Total Cases	6	86	1	14	13	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is a strength for Chesterfield DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. The outcome report

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above applies the 24-hour standard to all accepted reports. The agency standard allows a .66% margin of error. Chesterfield DSS met this standard for 213 of the 214 cases investigated during the period under review.

Staff from a primary school in the county were asked about DSS's responsiveness. They stated, in part, "We get an immediate response. If the worker we call is not in the office, [the supervisor] gets back with us." DSS and the school have worked out a relationship over the years such that, when the school calls, DSS knows it's serious.

Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.2: Recurrence of Maltreatment – Of all children who were victims of indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect during the reporting period, the percent having another indicated report within a subsequent 6 month period.

Indicated Report Between Feb 1, 2003 and Jan 31, 2004

	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective <= 93.90%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	9,301	58	8,733.64	509.36
Chesterfield	50	0	46.95	3.05

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 2 : Repeat Maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	100	0	0	2	0
Treatment	7	88	1	12	2	0
Total Cases	15	94	1	6	4	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a Strength for Chesterfield DSS. According to CAPSS data no children in Chesterfield County had a second indicated report of maltreatment during the period under review. The one case rated "Area Needing Improvement" involved 5 prior unfounded investigations, leading to the child entering foster care, then returned home at the Merit Hearing. Although only one investigation was indicated for abuse, evidence of repeat maltreatment exists.

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Section Two

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Summary of Findings

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.
-Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren).

Overall Finding: Not Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 3 : Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	75	1	25	6	0
Treatment	4	44.4	5	55.6	1	0
Total Cases	7	54	6	46	7	0

Item 3

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Chesterfield County. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Forty-six percent of the applicable cases were rated Area Needing Improvement. It is significant that over half of the applicable treatment cases received this rating. The stakeholders interviewed on this subject explain the situation.

Stakeholders explained that the services needed to reduce the risk factors in the homes of children are often not available, or not accessible. It can take 2 to 3 months to get a psychological evaluation done, and the client must go to Camden (Kershaw County) to get it. Medication monitoring for clients using psychotropic medications is often not available. The Mental Health representative said that children with mental health needs are only seen if they are homicidal, suicidal, or have a court order mandating mental health services. One stakeholder said that DSS continues to be a catch-all for children who should be served by other agencies.

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Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4 : Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	89	1	11	1	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	14	78	4	22	2	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S2.2: Risk of harm to child – Of all unfounded investigations during the reporting period, the percent receiving subsequent reports within six months of the initial report.				
	Number Alleged Child Victims in an Unfounded Rept 04/01/03 to 03/31/04	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 93.90%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	14,128	1,287	13,266.19	(425.19)
Chesterfield	180	15	169.02	(4.02)

* This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This is an area needing improvement. The CAPSS report and the onsite review assess this item using different criteria. The CAPSS report uses subsequent reports of maltreatment as a measure of “risk of harm”. That is a proxy measure for “risk of harm” because subsequent reports do not necessarily mean that the children who are the subjects of those reports are at risk of harm. Those reports may or may not be substantiated after CPS assessment. The onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS.

Onsite reviewers found that risk of harm was not adequately managed in 4 (22%) of the applicable 18 cases reviewed. In those 4 cases, the case workers clearly described serious risk factors that remained in the home, but did not indicate what DSS was doing to address those risk factors. This was more of a problem in treatment cases than foster care cases.

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Section Three

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 5: Foster care re-entries
- Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt.
- Item 7: Permanency goal for child
- Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives
- Item 9: Adoption
- Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangmt

Partially Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Strength

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Findings: Strength

Findings: Area Needing Improvement

Findings: Strength

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.1: **Foster Care Re-entries** – Of all children who entered care during the year under review, the percent that re-entered foster care
Within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

	Number Children Entering Care 10/1/03 to 09/30/04	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective >= 91.40%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,079	266	2,814.21	(1.21)
Chesterfield	54	7	49.36	(-2.36)

* This is a federally established objective.

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Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is an Area Needing Improvement for Chesterfield DSS.

According to CAPSS, 7 of the 54 children (13%) who entered care in Chesterfield County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Those 7 children are **Re-entries**. None of those 7 cases were included in the sample checked by onsite reviewers. To meet the federal objective, no more than 5 of the 54 children could be re-entries.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 6: Stability of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.2: Stability of Foster Care Placement – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.				
	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective $\geq 86.70\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,599	2,969	3120.33	(151.33)
Chesterfield	65	57	56.36	0.65

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is a “Strength”. Fifty-seven of the 65 children (87.7%) in care less than 12 month had no more than 2 foster care placements. The staff did a good job of determining the type of foster care placement children need early in the life of the case. Another factor that contributes to stable placements in Chesterfield County is the activity of the Foster Parent Association (FPA). Almost all of the foster parents in Chesterfield County are members of the FPA. The FPA recruits and supports new members. Members assist each other in accessing services for the children in their care. Members arrange training sessions so that the training topics are relevant to foster parent needs and so that licensing hours are conveniently obtained.

The six foster parents interviewed said that the few child welfare caseworkers at Chesterfield DSS do all that they can do, but can’t provide foster parents with all of the

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support that they need. So they have figured out how to support each other. They had no criticism for the caseworkers or the management of the county DSS office.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.5: **Permanency Goal for Child** – Of all children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the percent for which a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition has been filed.

	Children in Care At Least 15 of Last 22 Months 08/03 – 07/04	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 45.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,613	1,925	1,625.85	299.15
Chesterfield	32	14	14.40	(0.40)

* This is DSS established objective. The federal agency, Administration for Children & Families, gathers data on this measure, but has not established a numerical objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Chesterfield DSS. The CAPSS report and the onsite reviewers consider related, but different information to rate this item. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 45.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. In Chesterfield DSS 43.75% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. Statewide 53% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. As a state, DSS met this objective.

Onsite reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) Is the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? and 2) Is the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Reviewers found that 80% of the foster care cases met those two criteria. To achieve a rating of “Strength” 90% of the cases reviewed would need to meet the two criteria.

One case was rated “Area Needing Improvement” because both the development of the case plan and the merit hearing were late, causing the sibling group of two to remain in

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foster care for 4 months, when they could have been returned home in less than two months. The other case was rated “Area Needing Improvement” because the plan of Reunification was not appropriate.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure P3.3: Length of Time to Achieve Reunification – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caregiver, at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children Where Foster Care Services Closed. Last Plan Was Return Home 10/01/03 – 09/30/04	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective $\geq 76.20\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,152	1,767	1,639.82	127.18
Chesterfield	46	43	35.05	7.95

* This is a federally established objective.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	80	1	20	5	0

Explanation

This is an “Strength” for Chesterfield DSS. The CAPSS report shows that 93% (43/46) of the children entering foster care returned home within a year of entering care. The staff generally do a good job of finding, assessing and placing children with appropriate relatives.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.4: **Length of Time to Achieve Adoption** – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.

	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective $\geq 32.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	347	69	111.04	(42.04)
Chesterfield	0	0	0	0

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 9: Adoption.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	80	1	20	5	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The strategic outcome report shows that no adoptions were finalized during the 12 months captured by this report. Reviews evaluated five cases involving children with a plan of adoption. Although four of the five cases reviewed were rated “Strength” the county faces serious challenges in getting children adopted.

- a. During Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) hearings one of the family court judges routinely asks DSS staff if a family has been identified for the child. If the answer is “No” the judge will not grant the TPR.
- b. In TPR cases, pro bono attorneys assigned to represent the parents usually do not talk to the parents until they meet in court. Continuances are then requested and routinely granted.
- c. Several stakeholders complained that the adoptions office serving Chesterfield County turns down children referred to them for services who should be accepted, and does not actively recruit families for the children they accept.

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Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.6: **Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement”** – Of all children in foster care, the percent with a permanency goal of emancipation (Indep Liv Services) or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family.

	Number of Children In Care at Least One Day 10/01/03 – 09/30/04	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective >= 80.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,003	1,122	6,426.40	484.60
Chesterfield	93	4	74.40	14.60

* This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	0	0	10	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Chesterfield DSS. Only 4 of the 93 children in care have a permanency goal of emancipation. None of the cases reviewed onsite had this goal. During interview the supervisors acknowledged that very few children age out of DSS in Chesterfield County. Those that do are usually well supported by their foster parents. The main challenge those few youth face is transportation to and from their jobs when they live in remote areas of the county.

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Section Four

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 11: Proximity of placement
- Item 12: Placement with siblings.
- Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings
- Item 14: Preserving connections
- Item 15: Relative placement
- Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents

Partially Achieved

- Finding: Strength**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Strength**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P4.1: **Proximity of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children in foster care during the reporting period (excluding MTS and Adoptions children), the percent placed within their county of origin.

	Number of Children In Care 10/1/03 – 09/30/04	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	5,974	3,999	66.94	4,181.80	(182.80)
Chesterfield	98	69	70.41	68.60	0.40

* This is a DSS established objective.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	100	0	0	1	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Chesterfield DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Chesterfield County. The outcome report indicates that 78.5% (73/93) of the children in care are placed in the county. All 9 of the applicable cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength” even though not all of those children were placed in county. The children placed out of county were in therapeutic placements to deal with their emotional and/or behavioral issues.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	71	2	29	3	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Seven of the ten foster care cases reviewed involved sibling groups. It was evident that caseworkers were attempting to keep sibling groups together. However, one of the cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” consisted of a sibling group of 4 that had experienced several moves prior to the period under review. The agency was not able to keep the children together. The other case involved a sibling group of 3, all under the age of 5, who were not placed together and were not in any type of specialized placement.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	60	4	40	0	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. Visitation plans in case records do not consistently address sibling visitation. Documentation of visits for 4 of the 10 cases reviewed was not in the case file.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. All 6 cases for which this item applied were rated “Strength”. Documentation in the case record clearly showed that this area was attended to by caseworkers. Foster parents in Chesterfield County are (with some exceptions) actively working to help the children in their care maintain contact with the important people and activities associated with their biological families.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In 7 of the 10 cases reviewed the workers did an excellent job of identifying and assessing the appropriateness of relatives as possible caregivers. In the 3 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” the agency did not follow-up on the information it had. Those records showed relatives were identified, and in one case requested the children, but the agency did not assess those relatives.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	33	4	67	4	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. The agency did not consistently document diligent efforts to find and involve absent parents in the lives of their children in foster care. Interviews with foster parents suggest that some of the parents may have more involvement with their children than is documented in the case records.

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Section Five

Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 17: Needs & services
- Item 18: Involvement in case planning
- Item 13: Worker visits with child
- Item 14: Worker visits with parent(s)

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Findings: Area Needing Improvement**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	60	4	40	0	0
Treatment	3	30	7	70	0	0
Total Cases	9	45	11	55	0	0

Explanation

This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Chesterfield DSS. Although both treatment and foster care cases were generally weak in this area, treatment cases were particularly weak. The assessments were generally done well, needs identified, but not addressed with appropriate services.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	4	50	4	50	2	0
Treatment	5	56	4	44	1	0
Total Cases	9	53	8	47	3	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Involving parents in case planning is not the practice in Chesterfield DSS. The practice is that plans are written by the caseworker then sent to the parents. Most case plans are not signed by the parents. About half of the cases reviewed were rated “Strength” because the worker went over the plan with parents and gave them the opportunity to have some input after-the-fact.

Staff acknowledged that parents of children in foster care may not see their plan until they get to court. One stakeholder said that many parents are not invested in their plan because they had no part in its development.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	80	2	20	0	0
Treatment	7	56	2	44	1	0
Total Cases	15	79	4	21	1	0

Explanation

This is a “**Area Needing Improvement**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) are Chesterfield DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? Face-to-Face visits with children in foster care and in treatment cases are being done according to state law and policy. However, 4 of the 19 applicable cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement” because they failed to meet the second criteria described above. In those cases where visits did not focus on relevant issues, progress toward treatment goals was slow or there was no progress at all.

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<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	2	25	6	75	2	0
Treatment	5	56	4	44	1	0
Total Cases	7	41	10	59	3	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for both foster care and treatment cases. The 3 cases rated “Not Applicable” are absent parents, parents whose rights have been terminated, or parents the agency has been relieved of serving by the court. Less than half of the applicable cases were rated “Strength” for this item for two reasons: 1) visits with parents were not done consistently, and 2) content of visits did not consistently address the issues that required DSS involvement in those families’ lives.

Section Six

Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

Partially Achieved

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	83	1	17	4	0
Treatment	4	50	4	50	2	0
Total Cases	9	64	5	36	6	0

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Explanation

This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed?

Chesterfield DSS staff are more likely to attend to the educational needs of children in foster care than children in treatment cases. Based on stakeholder interviews, the agency's relationship with area schools is very good. When invited, school personnel participate in DSS staffings and DSS staff participate in school staffings. So, lack of cooperation between agency and schools is not the problem.

Several cases rated "Area Needing Improvement" identified a list of psychiatric, behavioral and medical conditions that would impair the child's school performance, but there was no indication that this information was shared with the school, or that the child's school performance was being looked at. Again, this deficiency was more prevalent in treatment cases than in foster care cases.

Section Seven

Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 22: Physical health of the child
- Item 23: Mental health of the child

Not Achieved

- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
- Finding: Area Needing Improvement**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 23: Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	14	70	6	30	0	0

Explanation

This is an "Area Needing Improvement". The physical health needs of most of the children reviewed (70%) were properly attended to. However, some cases showed a failure to attend to identified needs, i.e. dental, eye, etc. The absence of documented follow up was evident in cases involving infants that tested positive for drugs (cocaine) at

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birth. When those children remain in the home (treatment cases), the inherent risks require that DSS ensure that the child's medical needs are attended to.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	60	2	40	5	0
Treatment	2	29	5	71	3	0
Total Cases	5	42	7	58	8	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Mental health services for DSS clients are generally not available in Chesterfield County. Chesterfield is part of a tri-county Mental Health system (Chesterfield, Marlboro, Dillon). When this review was conducted the child & adolescent counselor positions in all three counties were vacant. The Mental Health administrator interviewed said, “We can’t keep a psychologist.” Consequently, Mental Health will not accept a referral unless the child is homicidal, suicidal, or has been ordered by the court to receive Mental Health services.

The DSS staff and foster parents are well aware of this deficiency. They rely on mental health professionals employed at area hospitals and a private therapist in Darlington.

Section Eight – Screened Out Intakes

Appropriately Screened Out?	Yes	No	Cannot Determine
	12	2	1

Appropriate Collaterals Contacted?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	3	1	11

Appropriate Referrals Made?	Yes	No	Not Applicable
	4	2	9

Explanation

Not all calls made to DSS meet the legal definition of child abuse or neglect. Each DSS office must have an intake process that accurately determines which calls should be accepted for investigation and which should be screened out. Fifteen screened out intakes were reviewed.

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Analysis

This is an Area Needing Improvement.

Most (80%) of the screened out intakes were appropriate. The two intakes screened out inappropriately involved domestic violence with small children present – one in the car where the incident occurred, the other in the mother's arms. Both cases had previous reports. Mental illness was also a factor in one of these cases.

Intake and assessment staff may need training on how this particular combination of factors creates high risk for infants and small children.

Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	Yes	No
Investigation Initiated Timely?	4	1
Assessment Adequate?	3	2
Case Decision Appropriate?	4	1

Analysis

This is an Area Needing Improvement.

The significance of immediate safety issues in two cases were not adequately assessed. In one case the ability of a physically ill mother to care for her 3 small children was not adequately assessed, leaving the children at risk. One case was closed without interviewing either parent.

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Section Ten – Foster Home Licenses

A review of 11 foster home licensing records was completed.

1. All 11 records were well organized and kept up-to-date. The overall quality of the program was excellent.
2. The records were easy to read and the materials in the files appeared to give very individualized impressions of each foster home.
3. The families themselves appeared to be appropriate for foster parenting.
4. All files had current SLED, FBI, Central Registry and Sex Offender checks.
5. Fire escape plans, disaster plans, fire and health inspections, were all in order.
6. All required training was documented. Discussions of weapons usage and discipline policy documented.
7. There were no OHAN reports or regulatory cases in any of the records reviewed.
8. Quarterly visits were done timely in all but 2 cases. In those 2 cases the visit was done late. Dictation for the visits was in CAPSS and in the case record.

Concerns:

1. The two-year licensing cycle was applied to 2 foster homes prior to its implementation.
2. One foster home had a 12 year old in the home for whom the sexual offender registry check had not been done.

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Case Rating Summary

The performance and outcome ratings below show the number of cases receiving that rating, followed by the percent of the total that number represents. Not Applicable (N/A) cases do not factor in the percentage.

Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improve - ment	N/A*	Substan- tially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				18 (95%)	0	1 (5%)	1
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	13				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	4				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				11 (61%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	2
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	7 (54%)	6 (46%)	7				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	13 (72%)	5 (28%)	2				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	6 (100%)	0	4				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	10 (100%)	0	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5				
Item 9: Adoption	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	0	0	10				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	9 (100%)	0	1				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	3				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0				
Item 14: Preserving connections	6 (100%)	0	4				
Item 15: Relative placement	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	4				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				9 (45%)	10(50%)	1-5%	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	9 (45%)	11 (55%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	9 (53%)	8 (47%)	3				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	1				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	7 (41%)	10 (59%)	3				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				9 (64%)	1 (7%)	4 (29%)	6
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	6				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				11 (55%)	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	5
Item 22: Physical health of the child	14 (70%)	6 (30%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	5 (42%)	7 (58%)	8				

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